



About Writing

A Guide

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About Writing

A Guide by Robin Jeffrey

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Composing and Revising [\(Back to TOC\)](#)

Understanding the Assignment

There are four main sections of analysis you need to do in order to fully understand an assignment: [determining the purpose of the assignment](#), [understanding how to answer an assignment's questions](#), [recognizing implied questions in the assignment](#), and [recognizing the disciplinary expectations of the assignment](#).

Always make sure you fully understand an assignment before you start writing!

Determining the Purpose

The wording of an assignment should suggest its purpose. Any of the following might be expected of you in a college writing assignment:

- Summarizing information
- Analyzing ideas and concepts
- Taking a position and defending it
- Combining ideas from several sources and creating your own original argument

Understanding How to Answer the Assignment

College writing assignments will ask you to answer a *how* or *why* question, questions that can't be answered with just facts (like, for example, the question *What* are the names of the presidents of the US in the last twenty years?), but require you to take a position and support that position with evidence (like, *Who* was the best president of the last twenty years and *why?*).

Sometimes, a list of prompts may appear with an assignment. Remember, your instructor will not expect you to answer all of the questions listed. They are simply offering you some ideas so that you can think of your own questions to ask.

Recognizing Implied Questions

A prompt may not include a clear 'how' or 'why' question, though one is always implied by the language of the prompt. For example:

“Discuss the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on special education programs” is asking you to write *how* the act has affected special education programs.

“Consider the recent rise of autism diagnoses” is asking you to write *why* the diagnoses of autism are on the rise.

Recognizing Disciplinary Expectations

Depending on the discipline in which you are writing, different features and formats of your writing may be expected. Always look closely at key terms and vocabulary in the writing assignment, and be sure to note what type of evidence and citations style your instructor expects.

Assessing the Writing Situation

Before beginning the writing process, always establish the following:

- Is there an assigned topic or are you free to choose your own?
- What about your subject interests you?
- Why is your subject worth reading about?
- Double check that your subject is not too broad – narrow it if necessary.
- Determine the purpose of the work.
- Determine the readers of the work and their level of knowledge about the topic.
- Determine where your evidence will come from.
- Decide what kind of evidence would best serve your argument.
- Identify the required style (MLA, APA, etc.) of the paper.
- Be aware of length specifications.
- Consider if visuals might be helpful in your paper.
- Will someone be reviewing drafts of your paper? Who?
- Note your deadline and how much time you have for each stage of the writing process.

Test Your Thesis

You've come up with what you hope will be a great thesis for your paper. Want to make sure before you get started with it? Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does your thesis take a position, propose a solution, or answer a question?
2. Does the thesis give you enough material on which to right a full-length paper?
3. Can you come up with interpretations of your thesis that don't match your own?
4. Is there evidence to support your thesis?
5. Will readers want to read an essay with this thesis?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'no', you'll want to go back and revise your thesis.

Constructing an Outline

- I. Put the thesis at the top
 - A. Make items at the same level have the same grammar/tenses.
 - B. Use full sentences when possible.
 1. Use the conventional system of numbering (such as being demonstrated now)
 2. Always include no less than two items per level.
 - a. Use as few major sections (I., II., III., etc.) as possible.
 - b. If the list gets too long, try clustering the items into broader categories with more subcategories

Checklist: Revision

- The draft addresses a question or issue that readers will care about.
- The draft is written at the audience's level, accounting for their level of knowledge and attitudes.
- The thesis is clear and placed at or near the beginning of the paper.
- All ideas within the draft relate to the main thesis.
- There are plenty of organizational cues (topic sentences, headings, etc.) to help guide the readers through the paper.
- Ideas are presented in an order that makes sense.
- Paragraphs are long enough to cover the topic, but short enough to keep it interesting.
- The evidence used is relevant and persuasive.
- All ideas are fully developed.
- Any unnecessary material has been deleted.
- The point of view is appropriate both for the draft's purpose and the intended audience.

How to: Be a Constructive Peer Reviewer

- You aren't casting judgment on a work, you're coaching the writer. Remember to include the writer in the process, helping them find the draft's strengths and weaknesses rather than telling them what they are or are not doing wrong.
- Check with the writer to make sure you're understanding the main ideas of the work.
- Give specific compliments as well as specific criticism; reviewing isn't just about one or the other.
- If you find a passage confusing, ask the writer for clarification.
- Always express an interest in reading the next draft.

Transitions

Addition	and, also, besides, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, next, too, first, second
Examples	for example, for instance, to illustrate, in fact, specifically
Compare	also, similarly, likewise
Contrast	but, however, on the other hand, in contrast, nevertheless, still, even though, on the contrary, yet, although
Summarize/Conclude	in other words, in short, in conclusion, to sum up, therefore
Time	after, as, before, next, during, later, finally, meanwhile, since, then, when, while, immediately
Place/Direction	above, below, beyond, farther on, nearby, opposite, close, to the left
Logical Relationship	if, so, therefore, consequently, thus, as a result, for this reason, because, since

Checklist: Planning a Document

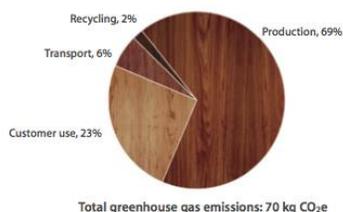
- Determine your document's purpose.
- Plan your document's design to support this purpose.
- Identify your document's audience.
- Identify your audience's expectations.
- Decide what format your document will require (include layout, margins, line spacing, font styles, etc.).
- Decide whether or not visuals will be helpful to include in your document.
 - If you decide to use visuals, determine what kind of visual would be most useful.

Visuals Help You Communicate

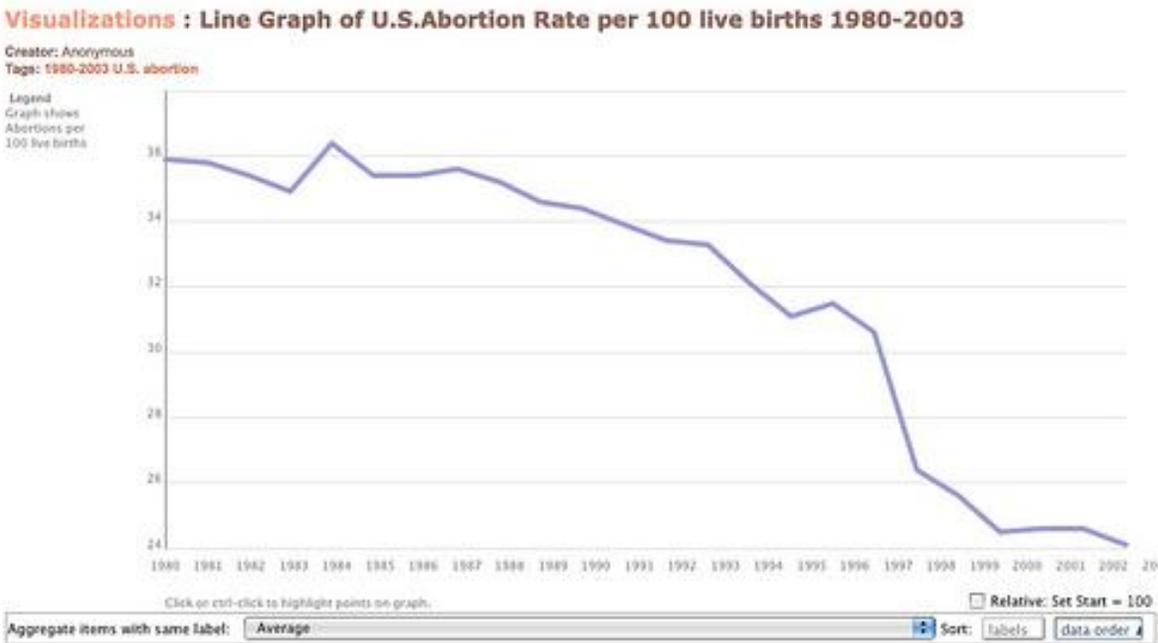
Should you use...

...a pie chart? Pie charts are great for illustrating comparisons between a part and the whole. Segments of the chart represent percentages of the whole.

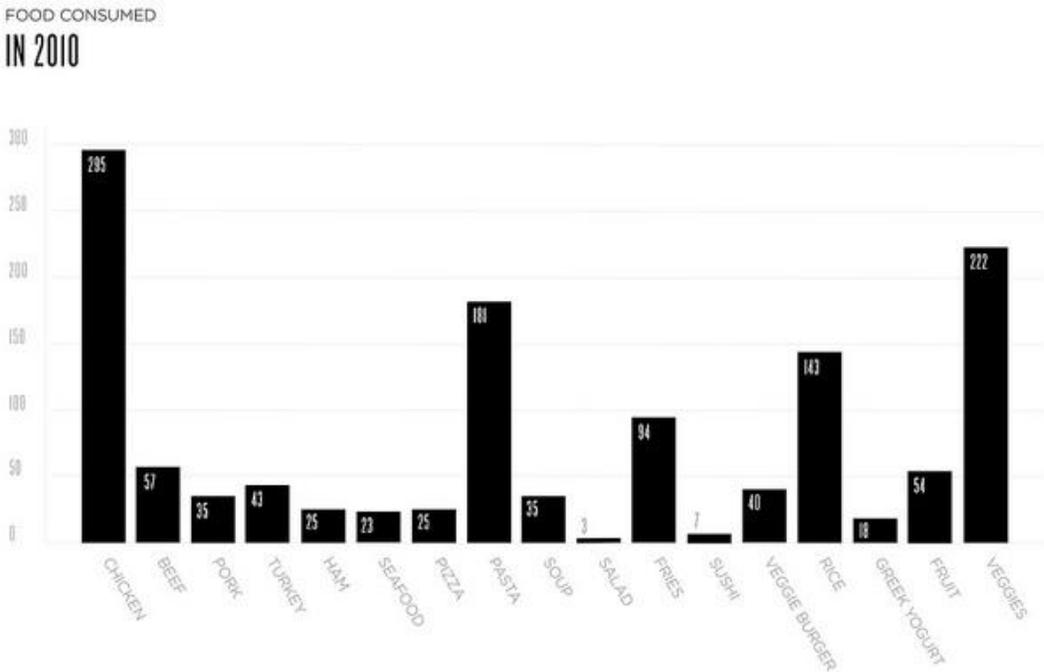
Greenhouse Gas Emissions for iPhone 4S



...a line graph? Line graphs are great if you want to emphasize a particular trend over time.



...a bar graph? Bar graphs serve basically the same purpose as line graphs, emphasizing trends over a particular period of time.



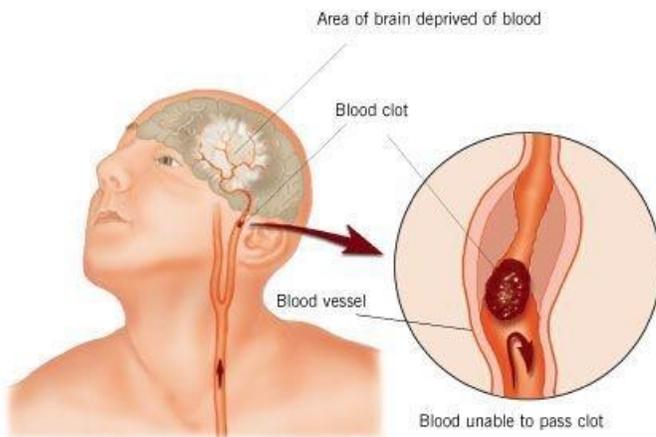
...a table? Tables are good ways to visually organize complex numerical information, especially if you have a lot of data.

Disc number	Push core handle (Colour)	Layer (0-5 cm / 0-10 cm)	Notes
001	RED TIE	0-5	
002	RED TIE	5-10	
003	RED TIE	0-5	
004	RED TIE	5-10	
005	RED TIE	0-5	
006	RED TIE	5-10	
007	RED TIE	0-5	
008	RED TIE	5-10	
009	RED TIE	0-5	
010	RED TIE	5-10	
011	RED TIE	0-5	
012	RED TIE	5-10	
013	RED TIE	0-5	
014	RED TIE	5-10	
015	RED TIE	0-5	
016	RED TIE	5-10	
017	RED TIE	0-5	
018	RED TIE	5-10	
019	RED TIE	0-5	
020	RED TIE	5-10	

...a photograph? Photographs are easy ways to clearly depict people, situations, or ideas that might be discussed in your text.



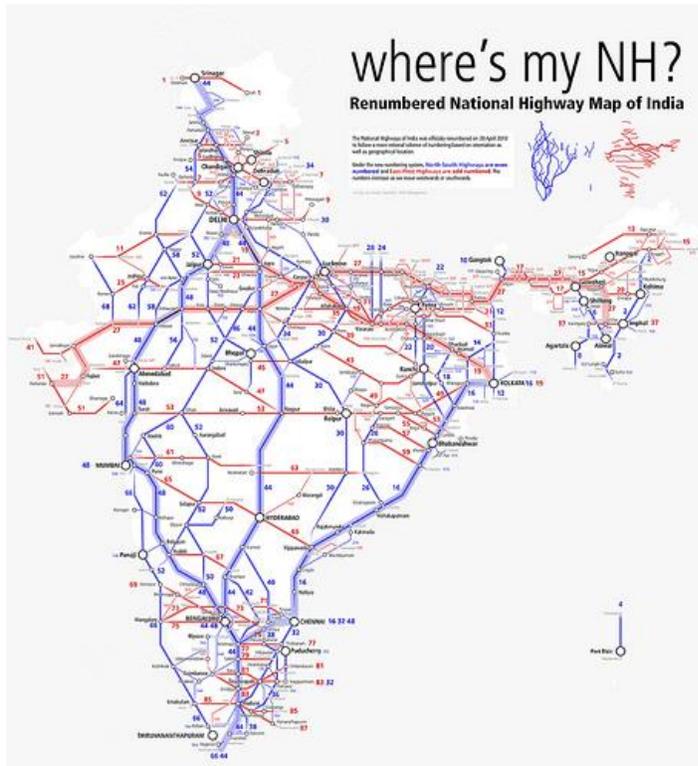
...a diagram? Diagrams are used most often in scientific or technical writing because of their ability to convey complex processes and structures simply.



...a flowchart? Flowcharts are great for showing structure as well as steps in a linear process.



...a map? Maps are the perfect choice for illustrating geographical distances, demographics, or other data that is at least partially dependent on place.



Academic Writing ([Back to TOC](#))

Active Reading

Start by getting familiar with the basic parts and structure of the text:

- What kind of text are you reading? An essay? A web site?
- Every author has a purpose; find it.
- Who is the audience and how does the author try to appeal to them?
- What argument is the author making/question does the text try to answer?
- What evidence does the author provide?
- Are there any key terms the author defines?

As you're reading, make note of anything that especially catches your attention:

- Is there a fact or point that challenged your assumptions?
- Any surprises?
- Did the author make a point or argument that you disagree with?
- Are there any inconsistencies in the text?
- Does the text contain anything (words, phrases, ideas) that you don't understand?

After you've finished reading, read it again:

- Are there things you didn't notice the first time reading the text?
- Does the text leave some questions open-ended?
- Imagine the author is sitting across from you: what would you ask him about the text? Why?

If the text you're 'reading' is visual in nature try this extra tips:

- What first strikes you about the image?
- Who/what is the main subject of the visual?
- What colors/textures dominate the visual?
- What objects/people are in the background/foreground?
- Do words or numbers play any role in the visual?
- When was the visual created?

How to: Write a Summary

At the very beginning of your summary, mention the title of the text you are summarizing, the name of the author, and the central point or argument of the text. Always maintain a neutral tone and use the third-person point of view and present tense (i.e. *Tompkins asserts...*). Keep the focus of the summary on the text, not on what you think of it, and try to put as most of the summary as you can in your own words. Present the text's main points only and be concise! Every word should count.

Analyzing a Text

Written Texts

You will have many instructors who ask you to analyze an essay or article, often expecting you to address some of the following:

- What is the thesis or central idea of the text?
- Who is the text's intended audience?
- What questions does the author address?
- How does the author structure the text?
- What are the key parts of the text?
- How do the key parts of the text interrelate?
- How do the key parts of the text relate to the thesis?
- What does the author do to generate interest in the argument?
- How does the author convince the readers of their argument's merit?
- What evidence is provided in support of the thesis?
- Is the evidence in the text convincing?
- Has the author anticipated opposing views and countered them?
- Is the author's reasoning sound?

Visual Texts

You will have some instructors who ask you to analyze a piece of visual work, often expecting you to address some of the following about the image:

- What confuses, surprises, or interests you about the image?
- In what medium is the visual?
- Where is the visual from?
- Who created the visual?
- For what purpose was the visual created?
- Identify any clues that suggest the visual's intended audience.
- How does this image appeal to that audience?
- In the case of advertisements, what product is the visual selling?
- In the case of advertisements, is the visual selling an additional message or idea?
- If words are included in the visual, how do they contribute to the meaning?
- Identify design elements – colors, shapes, perspective, and background – and speculate how they help to convey the visual's meaning or purpose.

Countering Opposing Arguments

Almost anything you can argue, or claim, in a paper can be refuted. Opposing points of view and arguments exist in every debate, and it's important to anticipate possible objections to your arguments. In order to do that, ask yourself the following questions:

- Could someone draw a different conclusion from the facts or examples you present?
- Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims?
- Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue?
- Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the next set of questions can help you respond to these potential objections:

- Is it possible to concede the point of the opposition, but then challenge that point's importance/usefulness?
- Can you offer an explanation of why a reader should question a piece of evidence or consider a different point of view?
- Should you consider explaining how your position responds to any contradicting evidence?
- Can you put forward a different interpretation of evidence?

You can use signal phrases in your paper to alert readers that you're about to present an objection. It's usually best to put this phrase at the beginning of a paragraph such as:

- Researchers have challenged these claims with...
- Critics argue that this view...
- Some readers may point to...

Putting Inductive Reasoning to the Test

Inductive reasoning, a way of thinking that makes sense of things by making specific observations and then drawing broad conclusions based on those observations, is a great way to come to a probable conclusion. Ask three simple questions of the evidence you're using to back up your conclusion, and you can see if your argument is supported by inductive reasoning.

1. Is the evidence sufficient?
2. Does the evidence reflect the characteristics of all the individuals involved?
3. Is the evidence relevant to your topic?

Most Common Evidence Used by Authors

Humanities: Literature, Art, Film, Music, Philosophy

- Critical essays that analyze other original works
- Details from an image, a film, or other work of art
- Passages from a musical composition
- Passages of text, including poetry

Humanities: History

- Primary Sources (photos, letters, maps, official documents, etc.)
- Other books or articles that interpret primary sources or other evidence.

Social Sciences: Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology

- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies.
- Results from field research (including interviews, surveys, observations, etc.)
- Data from their own experiments
- Statistics

Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics

- Data from their own experiments
- Books or articles that interpret data and results from other people's original experiments or studies.

Academic Writing: Point of View

If you're sitting down to write an analytical or research essay (which are most essays about the humanities), you'll want to be writing in the third-person point of view: *Achebe argues...* or *Carter describes her experiences as...*

Scientists (including social scientists) tend to use third-person point of view as well, because they depend largely on quantitative research to present their findings or support their opinions: *The results indicated...*

Occasionally, social scientists and writers in the humanities will use first person to discuss their own experiences while doing research or if writing part of a personal narrative as evidence: *After spending a year living with the Upendi, I came to the conclusion that...* or *Every Christmas we went to the same place, as if our memories could be rekindled...*

Academic Writing: Verb Tense

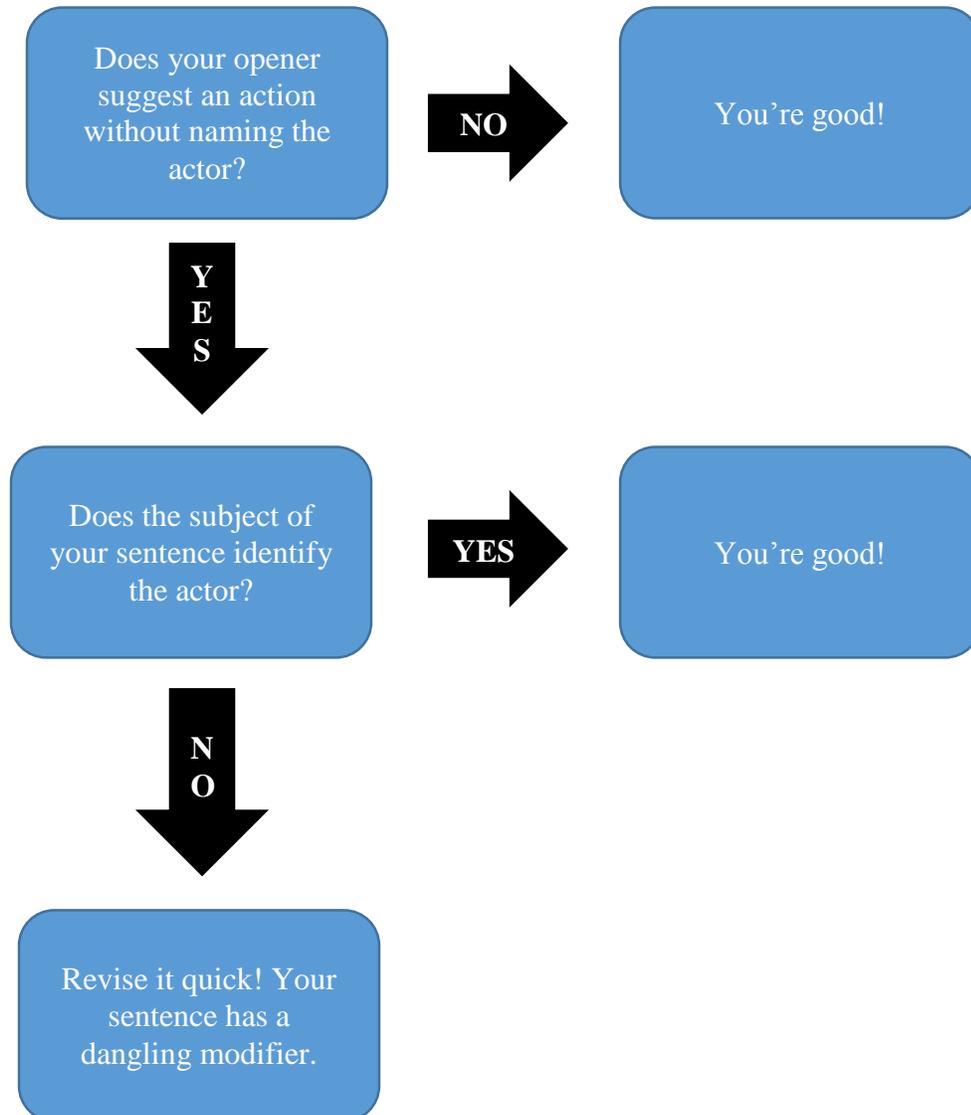
Scholars of literature will use the present tense to talk about a text: *Humphrey's continual references to the color pink further emphasizes the imagery of the rose...*

Whereas scientists (including social scientists) will use the past tense to talk about experiments, and only use the present tense when discussing results of those experiments: *In 2013, Baker conducted the first of his experiments...His results are interesting, if inconclusive.*

History writers use present, or present perfect tense, to discuss their texts: *Shirley Macintyre writes in her diary that the fighting was fiercest on the ridge...* or *Shirley Macintyre has written that the fighting was fiercest on the ridge...*

Sentence Style ([Back to TOC](#))

Does Your Sentence Have a Dangling Modifier?



Grammatical Sentences ([Back to TOC](#))

Subject-Verb Agreement

Present Tense Forms of *want* and *relax*

	Singular		Plural	
First Person	I	want	We	want
Second Person	You	want	You	want
Third Person	He/she/it	wants	They	want

	Singular		Plural	
First Person	I	relax	We	relax
Second Person	You	relax	You	relax
Third Person	He/she/it	relaxes	They	relax

Present Tense Forms of *have*

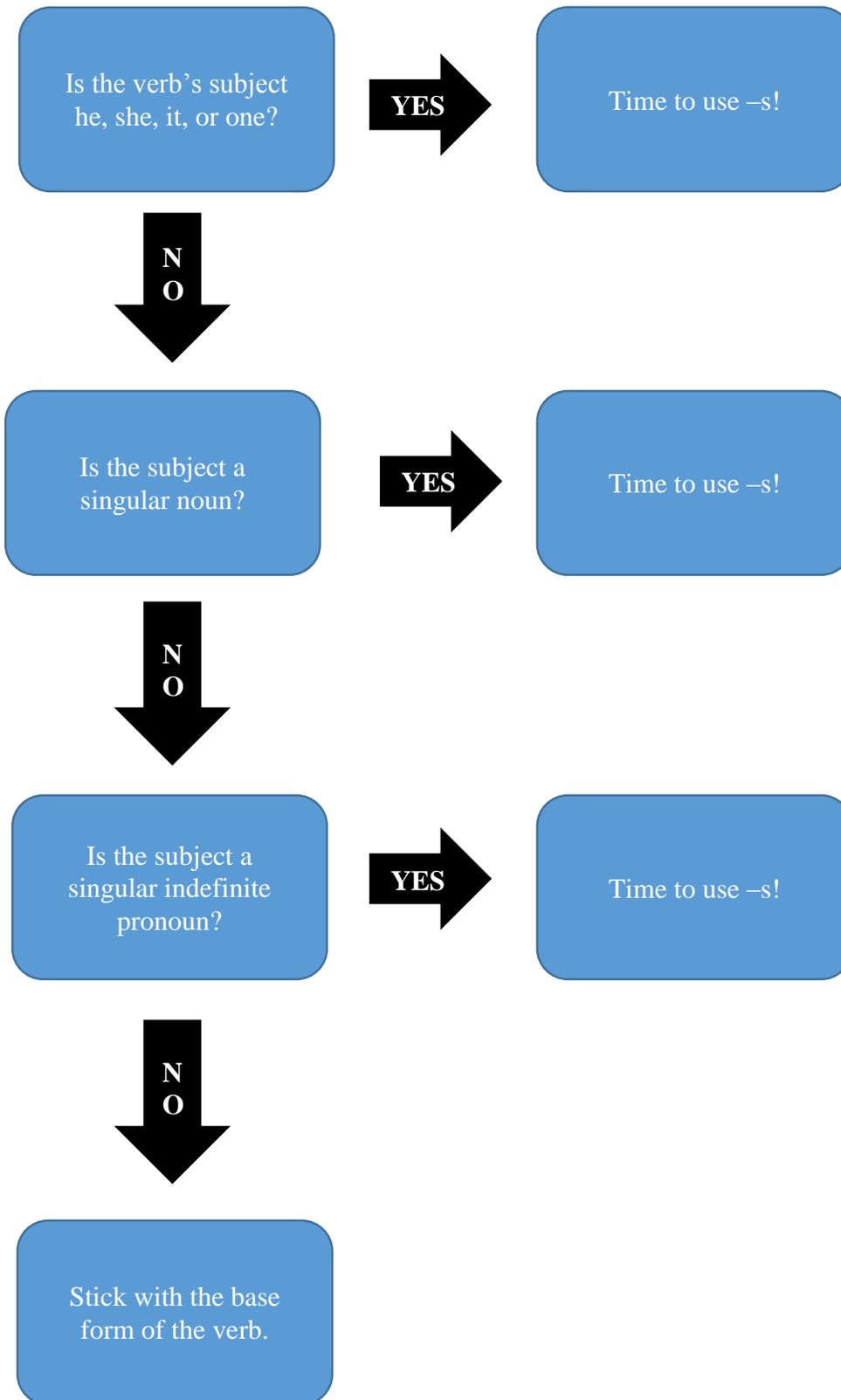
	Singular		Plural	
First Person	I	have	We	have
Second Person	You	have	You	have
Third Person	He/she/it	has	They	have

Present Tense Forms of *do/don't*

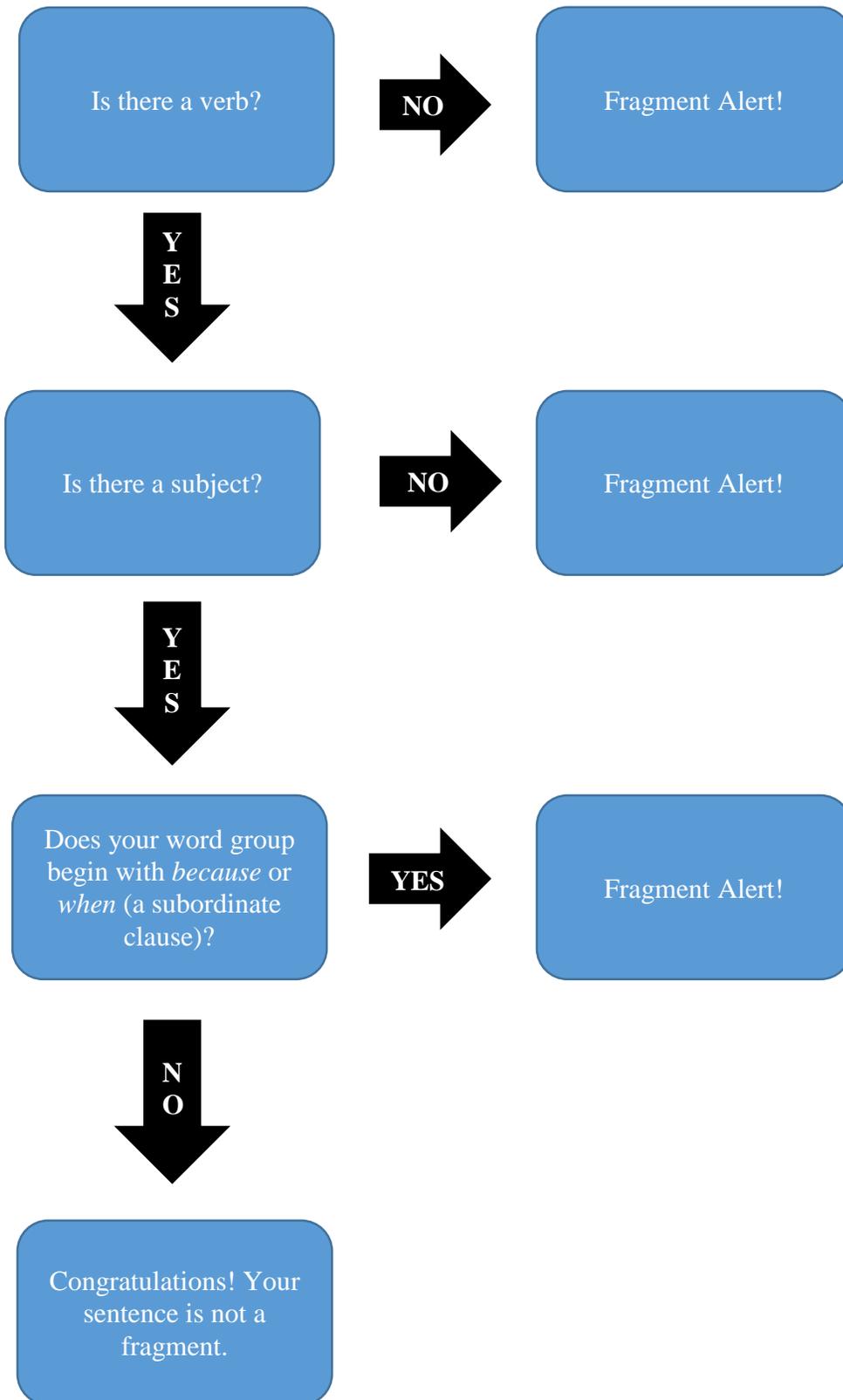
	Singular		Plural	
First Person	I	do/don't	We	do/don't
Second Person	You	do/don't	You	do/don't
Third Person	He/she/it	does/doesn't	They	do/don't

Present Tense Forms of *be*

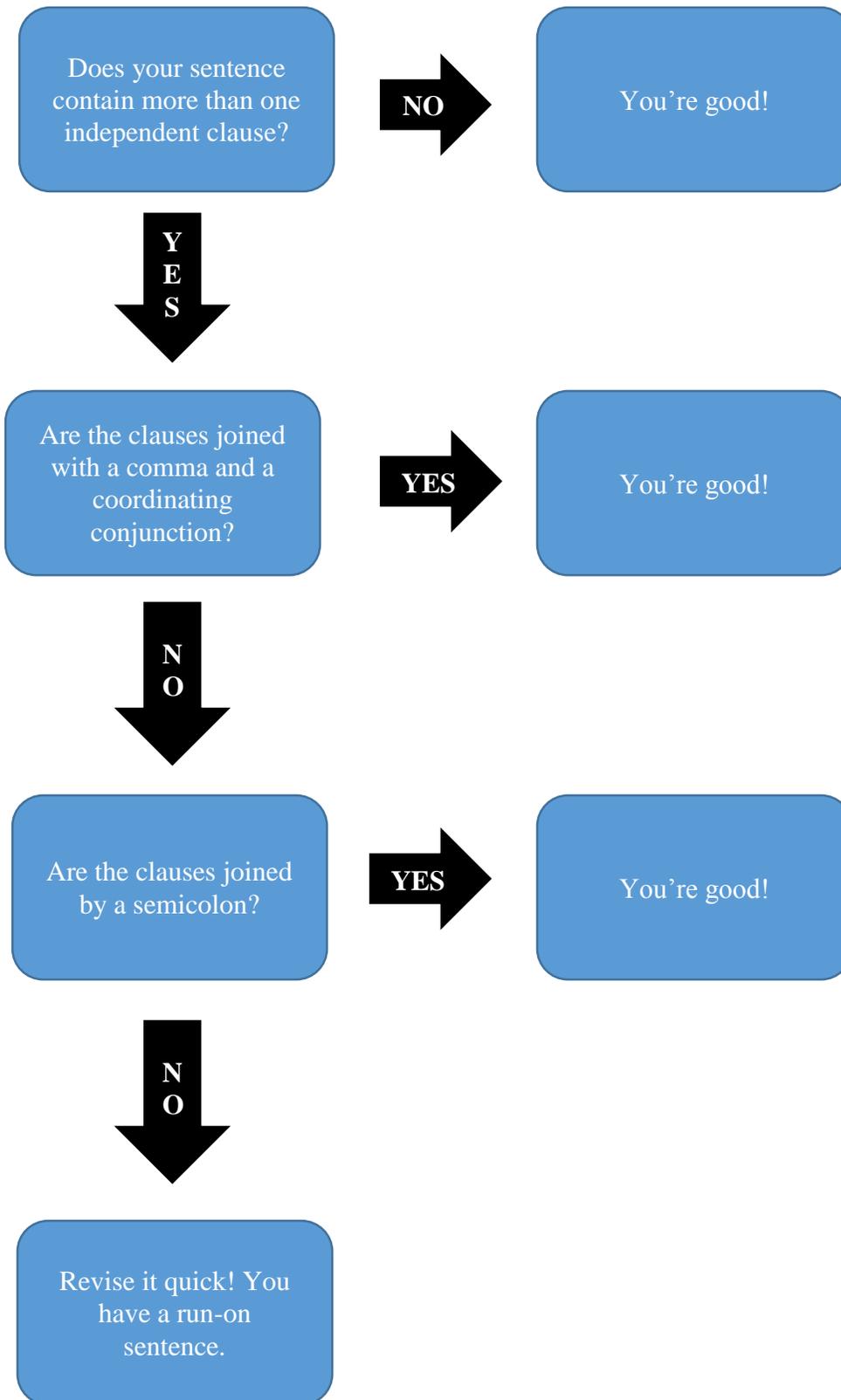
	Singular		Plural	
First Person	I	am/was	We	are/were
Second Person	You	are/were	You	are/were
Third Person	He/she/it	is/was	They	are/were

Should You Use -s (or -es)?

Is Your Sentence a Fragment?



Is Your Sentence a Run-On?



Multilingual Writers and ESL Challenges ([Back to TOC](#))

Verb Forms: The Basics

	Regular Verb – <i>Relax</i>	Irregular Verb – <i>Sing</i>	Irregular Verb – <i>Be</i>
Base Form	<i>Relax</i>	<i>Sing</i>	<i>Be</i>
Past Tense	<i>Relaxed</i>	<i>Sang</i>	<i>Was, were</i>
Past Participle	<i>Relaxed</i>	<i>Sung</i>	<i>Been</i>
Present Participle	<i>Relaxing</i>	<i>Singing</i>	<i>Being</i>
-s Form	<i>Relaxes</i>	<i>Sings</i>	<i>Is</i>

Verb Tenses: Active Voice

Simple Tenses

Simple Present: General facts, states of being, scheduled events in the future, and repeated actions

=
base form or –s form

- Ex. Teachers often *grade* late into the night.
 Ex. Water *becomes* ice at 32 degrees Fahrenheit.
 Ex. Celebrities *donate* to hundreds of charities every year.
 Ex. The plane *departs* tonight at 9:00 p.m.

Simple Past: Completed actions from the past that occurred at a specific time or facts/states of being that occurred in the past

=
base form + -ed/-d/irregular form

- Ex. Their neighbors *worked* together to rebuild the house. He *drove* across country to prove a point.
 Ex. When she *was* young, my sister *played* with me all the time.

Simple Future: Future actions, predictions, or promises

=
will + base form

- Ex. I *will eat* in a few minutes. The rain *will stop* any second now.

Simple Progressive Forms

Present Progressive: Actions that are happening right now, but not happening forever or future actions

=
am, is, are + present participle

Ex. The teachers *are meeting* in the boardroom. Josie *is meeting* the principle.

Ex. We *are baking* cookies tomorrow.

Past Progressive: Actions that happened at a specific time in the past or past plans that didn't happen

=

was, were/was going to, were going to + present participle

Ex. They *were sailing* when the hurricane hit.

Ex. I *was going to fly* out tonight, but couldn't get a ticket.

Perfect Tenses

Present Perfect: Repetitive or constant actions that began in the past but are still happening or actions that happened at an unspecified time in the past

=

has, have + past participle

Ex. I *have loved* dogs since I was a child. Alex *has lived* in the UK for over a year.

Ex. Stephanie *has bought* three cars in three years.

Past Perfect: Actions that occurred/began before something else in the past

=

had + past participle

Ex. He *had just choked* when the ambulance drove by.

Perfect Progressive Forms

Present Perfect Progressive: Continuous actions that began in the past but are still occurring

=

has, have + been + past participle

Ex. Ygritte *has been trying* to learn knitting for years.

Past Perfect Progressive: Actions that began and continued in the past until some other action in the past occurred

=

had + been + present participle

Ex. By the time I moved to Klamath Falls, I *had been writing* for ten years.

Verb Tenses: Passive Voice

Simple Tenses

Simple Present: General facts or habitual repetitive actions

=

am, is, are + past participle

Ex. Lunch *is served* at noon.

Ex. The locks *are checked* every night.

Simple Past: Completed past actions

=

was, were + past participle

Ex. She *was rewarded* for her information.

Simple Future: Future promises, predictions, or actions

=

will be + past participle

Ex. I *will be there* on Saturday.

Simple Progressive

Present Progressive: Future actions (paired with go, leave, move, etc.) or actions that are currently in progress

=

am, is, are + being + past participle

Ex. The votes *are being counted* by impartial volunteers.

Ex. Joe *is being crowned* king of the dance.

Past Progressive: Actions that were in progress at a specific time past

=

was, were + being + past participle

Ex. They thought they *were being careful*.

Perfect Tenses

Present Perfect: Actions that happened at an unspecified time in the past or that begin in the past but are still currently occurring

=

has, have + been + past participle

Ex. The boat *has been delayed* because of the hurricane in the Atlantic.

Ex. Tests *have been proctored* by teachers for many years.

Past Perfect: Actions that began or occurred before something else in the past

=

had + been + past participle

Ex. She *had been searching* for clues for hours before bedtime.

NOTE: Future progressive, future perfect, & perfect progressive are not used in passive voice.

The Meaning of Modals

'can'

General ability in the present to do something, or an informal request or permission granted.

Ex. I *can write* a grammar book. George *can sing* better than his brother.

Ex. *Can I have* the last cookie? Megan *can use* my book.

'could'

General ability in the past to do something, or an informal request or permission granted.

Ex. Lester *could play* the piano when he was five.

Ex. *Could you pass* the salt?

'may'

A formal request or permission granted, or a possibility, something that could or could not happen.

Ex. *May I go* to the bathroom? Students *may use* a calculator on the test.

Ex. I *may go see* the movie tonight, or I *may wake up* early tomorrow to *see* it.

'might'

A possibility, something that could or could not happen. Usually stronger possibility than may.

Ex. The library *might allow* students to bring in food.

'must'

Something that is a necessity either in the present or the future, a strong possibility, or a near certainty in the present or past.

Ex. For the best result, you *must mix* the batter for five minutes.

Ex. Andrew *must be* late.

Ex. You *must have left* the tickets in the car.

'should'

Suggestions or advice, obligations or duties, or expectations.

Ex. Everyone *should drink* water every day.

Ex. The teacher *should protect* your personal information.

Ex. Your food *should arrive* soon.

'will'

A certainty, request, or promise.

Ex. If you don't go to sleep now, you *will regret* it tomorrow.

Ex. *Will you go to* Miranda's party with me?

Ex. Jamie *will plan* the wedding.

'would'

Polite requests or repeated actions in the past.

Ex. *Would you help* me finish this pie? I *would like* some milk.

Ex. Whenever Elias needed help with writing, he *would visit* his professor.

Nouns

Common

Common nouns are words that name general persons, places, or things, and they begin with lowercase letters.

Ex. school, ignorance, sunshine, teacher, city

Proper

Proper nouns are words that name *specific* persons, places, or things, and they begin with capital letters.

Ex. Mazama High School, Robin, Japan, President Obama, Lincoln Memorial, Enlightenment

Count

Count nouns are common nouns that name general persons, places, or things that can be counted, either singularly or plural.

Ex. boy, boys OR town, towns OR pigeon, pigeons OR religion, religions

Non-count

Non-count nouns are common nouns that name things or ideas that can't be counted or made plural.

Ex. gold, rain, gravel, goodness, ignorance, air

Singular

Singular nouns are any nouns that represent only one person, place, or thing.

Ex. purse, county, man, failure, Amazon River, Albatross Island

Plural

Plural nouns are count nouns that represent several persons, places, or things.

Ex. purses, counties, men, Cascade Mountains, Canary Islands

Specific (Definite)

Specific (or definite) nouns are words that name people, places, or things that can be identified within a group of the same type.

Ex. *The students in Professor Alan's class* are very bright.

Ex. *The train carrying the President* was an hour early.

Ex. *The books in the car* were damaged.

General (Indefinite)

General (or indefinite) nouns are words that name categories of people, places, or things, and are often plural.

Ex. *Teachers* should grade.

Ex. *Plays* help *people* connect.

Ex. *The subway* has made commuting between *libraries* easy.

Articles for Common Nouns

Use *the* if a reader could identify the noun specifically.

Ex. Please turn off *the lights*. We're not going to *the museum* tomorrow. (Count)

Ex. *The food* throughout Korea is excellent (Non-count)

Use *a/an* if the noun refers to a single item that is not specific. Never use *a/an* with plural or non-count nouns.

Ex. Bring *an eraser* to class. You'll be using *a pencil* to write an essay today. (Count)

Use a quantifier such as *enough*, *many*, *some*, etc. if the noun represents an unspecified amount and that amount is more than one but not all.

Ex. Amanda showed us *some souvenirs* of her trip to New Orleans. *Many birds* go there in the summer. (Count)

Ex. We didn't get *enough snow* this winter.

Use no article if the noun represents all items in a category or the category in general.

Ex. *Teachers* can attend the game for free. *Actors* must report backstage by 5:00 p.m. (Count)

Ex. *Gold* is a natural resource.

Non-count Nouns

Food

Beef
Bread
Butter
Candy
Cereal

Cheese
Cream
Meat
Milk
Pasta

Rice
Salt
Sugar
Water
Wine

Nonfood

Air
Cement
Coal
Dirt
Gasoline
Gold

Paper
Petroleum
Plastic
Rain
Silver
Snow

Soap
Steel
Wood
Wool

Abstract

Advice
Anger
Beauty
Confidence
Courage
Employment

Fun
Happiness
Health
Honesty
Information
Intelligence

Knowledge
Love
Poverty
Satisfaction
Wealth

Other

Biology
Clothing
Equipment
Furniture
Homework
Jewelry
Luggage
Machinery
Mail
Money
News
Poetry
Pollution
Research
Scenery

Traffic
Transportation
Violence
Weather
Work

Geography and ‘The’

With geographic nouns, sometimes you use ‘the’ and sometimes you don’t. Confusing, right? No longer:

Don’t Use ‘The’

Single Mountains or Islands (ex. Mount Hood, Madagascar)

Most Countries and Continents (ex. France, Algeria, North Korea, Australia, Antarctica)

Streets, Squares, and Parks (ex. Linden Street, Madison Square, Yosemite National Park)

Bays, Single Lakes (ex. Honolulu Bay, Lake Michigan)

Cities, States, and Counties (ex. Reno, Florida, Howard County)

Use ‘The’

Groups of Islands (ex. the British Isles)

Canals and Rivers (ex. the Suez Canal, the Mississippi)

Peninsulas (ex. the Arabian Peninsula, the Iberian Peninsula)

Country Names with *of* phrase (ex. the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of South Korea)

Mountain Ranges (ex. the Cascades, the Andes)

Oceans, Seas, and Gulfs (ex. the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico)

Large Regions and Deserts (ex. the West Coast, the Gobi)

How to Order Cumulative Adjectives

1. Article (or other Noun Marker) – *a, an, the, her, this, my Joe’s, two, many, some*
2. Evaluative Word – *repulsive, lazy, gross, beautiful, magical*
3. Size – *miniscule, small, large, gargantuan*
4. Length/Shape – *short, oval, long, diamond*
5. Age – *new, young, old, ancient*
6. Color – *orange, cerulean, red*
7. Nationality – *German, Chilean, Korean*
8. Material – *pewter, wood, silk, granite*
9. Noun/Adjective – *safe (as in safe room), mobile (as in mobile home)*

Ex: My collection includes ten large new figurines.

Three Magic Words: At, On, and In

These three words can help you show either time *or* place.

At 12:45, *at* dusk, *at* sunrise – Time

At the library, standing *at* the edge, walking *at* the signal, yelling ‘Surprise!’ *at* Sophie – Place

On Friday, *on* our anniversary – Time

On the fridge, the building *on* Sixth Street, *on* the stage – Place

In the evening, *in* June, *in* 1990, tested *in* forty minutes – Time

In the book, *in* Seattle, *in* my bedroom – Place

Combo Time! – Adjective/Preposition Edition

Accustomed to

Addicted to

Afraid of

Angry with

Ashamed of

Aware of

Committed to

Concerned about

Concerned with

Connected to

Covered with

Dedicated to

Devoted to

Different from

Engaged in

Engaged to

Excited about

Familiar with

Full of

Guilty of

Interested in

Involved in

Involved with

Known as

Known for

Made of

Made from

Married to

Opposed to

Preferable to

Proud of

Responsible for

Satisfied with

Scared of

Similar to

Tired of

Worried about

Combo Time! – Verb/Preposition Edition

Agree with	Decide on	Respond to
Apply to	Depend on	Result in
Approve of	Differ from	Search for
Arrive at	Disagree with	Speak to
Arrive in	Dream about	Speak with
Ask for	Dream of	Stare at
Believe in	Feel like	Succeed at
Belong to	Forget about	Succeed in
Care about	Happen to	Take advantage of
Care for	Hope for	Take care of
Compare to	Insist on	Think about
Compare with	Listen to	Think of
Concentrate on	Participate in	Wait for
Consist of	Rely on	Wait on
Count on	Reply to	

Basic Grammar [\(Back to TOC\)](#)

Introducing...Subordinate Clauses!

There are three different kinds of subordinate clauses: adverb clauses, adjective clauses, and noun clauses. Each of these clauses are introduced by certain words. These words are listed below.

Introducing Adverb Clauses

After	Though	Though
Although	If	Unless
As	In order that	Until
As if	Since	When
Because	So that	Where
Before	Than	Whether
Even	That	While

These are all subordinating conjunctions.

Introducing Adjective Clauses

That	Who	Whose
Which	Whom	

These are all relative pronouns.

When	Where	Why
------	-------	-----

These are all relative adverbs.

Introducing Noun Clauses

That	Who	Whose
Which	Whom	

These are all relative pronouns.

What	Whichever	Whomever
Whatever	Whoever	

These are all other pronouns.

How	Whenever	Whether
If	Where	Why
When	Wherever	

These are all other subordinating words.

Researching ([Back to TOC](#))

Keyword Searching: Do it Better!

What do you do if the results you want aren't coming up when you keyword search the web or a database? Here are a few helpful tips:

- Searching a phrase? Put it in quotation marks: “sexual assault on campuses” will get you results that are focused towards the entire phrase, not just one or two words.
- Searching for two terms that you think are topically related? Use AND (or +) to connect them: education AND racism, or, education + racism, will only bring up results that include both terms
- Searching for a term that's commonly associate with a topic you don't want to learn about? Use NOT (or -) in front of the keyword you don't want results from: articles NOT magazines, or, articles – magazines, will bring up results that are about articles, but exclude any results that also include the term magazines.
- Want to get back as many results on a topic as possible? Use * at the end of a word for any letters that might vary: smok*, will bring up results that include the term smoke, smoking, and smokers.

Is this source scholarly?

What the heck is a ‘scholarly’ or ‘peer reviewed’ source anyway? A scholarly source is any material that has been produced by an expert in their field, reviewed by other experts in that field, and published for an audience also highly involved in that field. A source is scholarly if the following are true:

- The source is written with formal language and presented formally
- The author(s) of the source have an academic background (scientist, professor, etc.).
- The source includes a bibliography documenting the works cited in the source
- The source includes original work and analysis, rather than just summary of what's already out there
- The source includes evidence from primary sources
- The source includes a description of the author(s) methods of research.

Evaluating Sources

Bias

Do some background checking on the author and publisher of the material. Do they support a particular political or religious view that could be affecting their objectivity in the piece? If they are associated with a special-interest group (i.e. the American Library Association or Keep America Safe), this might also be an indication of bias, unless alternative views are presented and addressed with appropriate respect.

Assess the Argument

Identify the author's main claim. What are they arguing is true or untrue? Pay attention to what the author uses to support their claim: relevant evidence or just emotional examples? Statistics should be used consistently and fairly, with an explanation of where they've come from. Check for logical fallacies in the author's argument and make sure the author considers opposing viewpoints.

Evaluating Web Sources

Author

Most every reputable website will list or site an author, even though you might have to dig into the site deeper than just the section you're interested in to find it. Most pages will have a home page or "About Us"/"About This Site" link where an author will be credited.

Once you find the name of the author, see what else you can find out about them; most importantly, their background in the area they are informing you about. If these author's qualifications are not listed on the site itself, don't be afraid to do a search for evidence on author sites or in other sources.

Sponsorship

The sponsor of the site, the person who is footing the bill, will often be listed in the same place as the copyright date or author information. If you can't find an explicit listing for a sponsor, double check the URL: .com indicates a commercial site, .edu an educational one, .org a nonprofit, .gov a government sponsor, .mil a military sponsor, or .net a network of sponsors. The end part of a URL may also tell you what country the website is coming from, such as .uk for the United Kingdom or .de for Germany.

Purpose

Determine why the site was created and who it was meant to inform – is it a website that was created to sell things to corporations, or a page hoping to persuade voters to take a side on a particular issue?

Relevancy

Depending on the information you are using, the currency of the site could be vital. Check the bottom of the webpage for the date of publication or the date of the latest update. Most of the links on the site should also still work – if they no longer do, that may be a sign the site is too out of date to be useful.

What Do You Need for a Citation?

For Books

- Author(s)
- Editors/translators
- Edition (if not first)
- Name, date, and city of publication/publisher.

For Articles

- Author(s)
- Title and Subtitle
- Name of source (magazine, journal, newspaper, etc.)
- Date of publication
- Volume, issue, and page numbers
- *If retrieved from a database, also...*
- Name of database
- Name of subscription service
- URL of database
- DOI (Digital Object Identifier)
- Date source retrieved

For the Web

- Author(s)
- Editors/Creators
- Title of source
- Title of site
- Publication information
- Date of publication or latest update
- Site sponsor
- Date source accessed
- Source URL

Avoiding Plagiarism

This chart follows MLA style. For information on other styles (i.e. APA, CMS) see those sections.

Using something word-for-word from another source?	Put quotation marks around the excerpt, use a signal phrase, and include a parenthetical citation with the page number: <i>McGuffin and Cross have said, “No one should ever eat cake without frosting” (22).</i> Or <i>Cake, according to McGuffin and Cross, is one of those foods that should never be eaten “without frosting” (22).</i>
Using something word-for-word from another source but changing word worms or adding words to improve clarity and flow?	Put quotation marks around the excerpt, and put brackets around the segments you have changed. Include a signal phrase and a parenthetical citation with the page number: <i>McGuffin and Cross seem to think that “...eat[ing] cake without frosting” should never be allowed (22).</i>
Paraphrasing or summarizing the author’s ideas without using the author’s exact words?	Use a signal phrase and include a parenthetical citation with the page number: <i>According to McGuffin and Cross, cake is one of those special foods that require an additive to be properly enjoyed, like frosting (22).</i>
Using something from a source but substituting in some synonyms?	DON’T. This is plagiarism, even if you use a signal phrase and include a parenthetical citation.

MLA/APA/CMS ([Back to TOC](#))

What is MLA, APA, and CMS?

MLA stands for Modern Language Association. It is a style of formatting academic papers that is used mostly in the liberal arts and humanities.

APA stands for American Psychological Association, the professional guild who first developed the guidelines of the style. APA is a style of formatting academic papers that is used mostly in the sciences, from psychology to geology.

CMS stands for the Chicago Manual of Style. It is a style of formatting written works that is most widely used in publishing.

MLA Signal Phrases

Keep things interesting for your readers by switching up the language and placement of your signal phrases.

Model Phrases

In the words of professors Greer and Dewey, “...”

As sociology scholar Janice Kinsey has noted, “...”

Creative Commons, an organization that helps internet users understand and create copyright for materials, reports that “...”

“...,” writes Deidre Tyrell, “...”

“...,” attorney Sanderson claims.

Kyles and Sanderson offer up a compelling point: “...”

Verbs

Acknowledges	Confirms	Insists
Admits	Contends	Notes
Adds	Declares	Observes
Agrees	Denies	Points out
Argues	Disputes	Reasons
Asserts	Emphasizes	Refutes
Believes	Endorses	Rejects
Claims	Grants	Reports
Comments	Illustrates	Responds
Compares	Implies	Suggests

Thinks

Writes

MLA Paper Review: Sources

Quotations

1. All quoted material should be enclosed in quotations marks unless set off from the rest of the text.
2. Quoted material should be accurate word-for-word. If anything was changed, brackets or ellipsis marks should indicated where the changes/omissions took place.
3. A clear signal phrase should alert your readers for each quotation and tell them why the quotation is there.
4. A parenthetical citation should follow each quotation.
5. Each quotation must be put in context.

Summaries (Paraphrasing)

1. Any summaries of the text should not include plagiarized wording.
2. Summaries must be followed by parenthetical citations.
3. A signal phrase should let your readers know where the summarized material begins as well as tell them why the summary is included in your paper.

Statistics & Facts

1. Any facts that are not common knowledge must have a parenthetical citation included in your paper.
2. Use a signal phrase to help your reader understand why the facts are being cited, unless it is clear enough without one.

APA Signal Phrases

Keep things interesting for your readers by switching up the language and placement of your signal phrases.

Model Phrases

In the words of Peterson (2012), "..."

As Johnson and Allen (2006) have noted, "..."

Einstein and Yvanovich (1956), researchers in physics, pointed out that, "..."

"...", claimed Carter (1998).

"...", wrote Dietrich (2002), "..."

Linguists McAllen et al. (2015) have compiled an impressive amount of data for this argument:
“...”

Harrison (2007) answered these criticisms with the following rebuttal: “...”

Verbs

Admitted	Contended	Reasoned
Agreed	Declared	Refuted
Argued	Denied	Rejected
Asserted	Emphasized	Reported
Believed	Insisted	Responded
Claimed	Noted	Suggested
Compared	Observed	Thought
Confirmed	Pointed out	Wrote

CMS Signal Phrases

Keep things interesting for your readers by switching up the language and placement of your signal phrases.

Model Phrases

In the words of geneticist Gregor Mendel, “...”¹

As Derek Terrence Crab has argued, “...”²

In a letter to his brother, a Freedom Rider who witnessed the riots wrote that “...”³

“...,” claims Benjamin Disraeli.⁴

“...,” writes Albert Camus, “...”⁵

Mary Shelly offers an intriguing interpretation: “...”⁶

Verbs

Admits	Contends	Reasons
Agrees	Declares	Refutes
Argues	Denies	Rejects
Asserts	Emphasizes	Reports
Believes	Insists	Responds
Claims	Notes	Suggests
Compares	Observes	Thinks
Confirms	Points out	Write

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